



**CONSERVATION
MINNESOTA**

Chair Fue Lee
House Capital Investment Committee
485 State Office Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Re: DE Amendment to HF 337

Dear Chair Lee and Committee Members:

I write to express Conservation Minnesota's strong support for the investments in forests, wetlands, and grasslands in the DE amendment to HF 337 (the House Omnibus 2021 Bonding Bill.) These investments will benefit all Minnesotans by reducing the impacts of climate change.

Carbon is sequestered in trees and forests as they grow. Increasing the amount of tree cover in Minnesota is a key strategy to help Minnesota mitigate and adapt to a changing climate and achieve GHG emission reduction goals. The DNR has established an initial goal to achieve an additional 5 million tons of GHG emissions offset by expanding tree cover in Minnesota. To achieve this goal, DNR has set a goal to plant approximately 12 million seedlings in Minnesota by 2025.

The DE Amendment helps to achieve this goal by allocating \$3.6 million for state nursery facilities (lines 4.21 to 4.29) and \$5 million for reforestation (lines 4.30 to 5.3). This investment is urgently needed because this work must begin now in order for Minnesota to recognize and fully benefit from the carbon sequestration potential of reforestation. In addition, reforestation helps to ensure the long-term health of the wood products industry in Minnesota, a sector that provides \$16 billion in annual economic impact and 62,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The DE Amendment also reduces the impact of climate change by investing in grasslands and wetlands through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) program. Research has shown that significant investments in the conservation of Minnesota's grassland, wetland, peatland, and forest habitats could mitigate 33.75% of Minnesota's statewide CO₂ emissions.



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The CREP program supports wetland and grassland protection by offering farmers compensation for reestablishing wetlands or grasslands on marginal, flood-prone, or ecologically sensitive lands. CREP is a 100% voluntary program and is an important tool for farmers who need to increase water storage or avoid losses on marginal agricultural land. Critically, CREP is a federal-state partnership and the state receives significant matching funds to implement the program. The DE amendment (lines 6.11 to 6.33) provides the \$14.3 million in state funds needed now to fully realize the federal match.

The SNA program protects Minnesota's most ecologically sensitive lands including significant wetlands, prairies, peatlands, and forests. Protecting and restoring these lands achieves gains for climate resiliency across the state by mitigating carbon emissions and providing many climate-related benefits, including preventing erosion, filtering runoff into rivers, lakes and streams, protecting drinking water, and mitigating flooding – all while creating corridors for plant and animal species to shift as they adapt to changing environments across Minnesota. The SNA program has seen significant underinvestment in recent bonding bills. We strongly support the DE Amendment which provides critical funds for the SNA program in lines 5.5 to 5.9.

The DE Amendment's investments in forests, wetlands, and grasslands benefit Minnesotans in every part of the state by sequestering carbon, reducing flooding, and protecting water quality. We strongly support these critical investments in the House Omnibus 2021 Bonding Bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the DE Amendment to HF 337.

Sincerely,

Nels Paulsen